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ABSTRACT

While the issue of rape evokes strong responses, confusion seems to occur not when a blitz or stranger rape occurs, but when an acquaintance or date rape occurs. This study assessed acquaintance rape scripts given a preset scenario. Subjects included female college students (N=32) and male college students (N=19). Subjects were given a scenario that included a conversation between two roommates with instructions to write down the events that had led up to the conversation. After completing this task, all subjects were asked if they agreed with the roommate's labeling this behavior as a rape and how confident they were about their response. Five scripts were elicited with the most common script being an early date rape script. None of the scripts mentioned a female with low self-esteem or one who wanted to start a relationship. Fraternities were also not mentioned as part of the scripts. Also the scripts did not include the idea of the male paying for the date so that the female owed him sexual favors. In some write-ups it was mentioned that the male did not understand the intent of the female's struggles. Significantly more subjects agreed with the roommate that this activity was a rape. When agreeing with this statement both males and females were confident of their responses. (ABL)

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Scripts for a date rape: Similarities and differences in males and females scripts

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Increasingly the issue of rape has been brought into the public focus. This issue is one that creates strong responses. Confusion seems to occur not when a blitz or stranger rape occurs but when an acquaintance or date rape occurs. Recent research that has investigated possible reasons for this confusion includes Ryan (1988) who asked subjects for their scripts for a rape and found that subjects reported a blitz rape script. Additionally, and Kahn (under review) had subjects complete a questionnaire (based on Koss's sexual experience survey) that included items involving forced sexual contacts, i.e., a rape. The last item on the questionnaire specifically asked if the subject had been raped. After completing the questionnaire, Torgler and Kahn had subjects write down their script for a rape. Unacknowledged rape victims (those that reported that they had not been raped even after checking off items involving forced sexual contact) tended to report a blitz rape script significantly more than often than an acquaintance rape script. These findings suggest that our perceptions of rape focus on blitz scenarios. The current research assessed acquaintance rape scripts given a preset scenario.

Method

Subjects. Thirty-two females (mean age=21.7) and nineteen males (mean age= 20.9) from Shippensburg University participated for extra credit in psychology classes.

Materials. All subjects were given a scenario (Table 1) that included a conversation between two roommates with instructions to write down the events that had lead up to the conversation. After completing this task, all subjects were asked if they agreed with the roommate's labelling this behavior as a rape and how confident they were about their response.

Results

Five scripts were elicited. The most common script was an early date rape script. 37% of the females and 34% of the males reported this script (Figure 1). Within this script both parties are aware that this activity was less than satisfactory.

The next two scripts were opposite scripts in that if one was reported the other is not possible. One of the scripts was reported by five of the females and one male. It was a relational date rape in that the couple knew each other and had been out before (Figure 2). In opposition to this script is an early date rape script where it is the couples first date (Figure 3). This script was reported by only three females. Notice that in this script the male is unaware of how the female is feeling about what has occurred.

The fourth script was an acquaintance rape script, reported by five females and four males (Figure 4). In this script it is possible that the couple knew each other but were not out on a date.

The final script was a party script, reported by five females and one male (Figure 5). Notice here all the activities are related to a specific type of activity.

When asked if they agreed with the roommate in terms of labelling this activity as a rape, 84% of the females and 79% of the males agreed with the roommate. Those females agreeing with the roommate (n=27) that this activity had been a rape were 92% confident of their responses. Those disagreeing with the roommate (n=5) were only 54% confident in their responses. Those males agreeing with the roommate (n=15) were 89% confident of their responses. Those disagreeing with the roommate (n=3) were 71% confident of their responses. Males were significantly more confident of their no responses than were females.

Figure 1

Script one. A couple has gone on a first date over the weekend. The two of them return to his place where they start to kiss. The female then says she does not want to have intercourse and the male feels lead on. Afterwards, the female is confused and leaves his place alone.

Figure 2

Script two. A couple have previously been dating or are dating steadily. He is ready to start to engage in sexual intercourse and he plans on having sex on this date. They return to his place where all

of his roommates are gone. They started to kiss and pet. After intercourse, the couple does not talk and the female leaves his place alone.

Figure 3

Script three. A couple are on their first date. He becomes physically coercive and they have intercourse in the car. The female is confused but the male feels that everything is normal. He talks to her as he takes her home.

Figure 4

Script four. A couple had known each other previously having met in a class. They go out to eat or to a movie. After this activity they return to his apartment to watch TV or a video. Returning to his place they discover that all of his roommates are gone. The male physically coerces the female while she struggles.

Discussion

It appears that acquaintance rape scripts can be elicited after reading a preset scenario. Interestingly, several differences were noted in this study in comparison to earlier studies or common "folk lore". None of the scripts mentioned a female with low self esteem or one who wanted to start a relationship. Fraternities were also not mentioned as part of the scripts. None of the scripts mentioned

that the female was dressed "hot" in terms of leading the male on. Also, the scripts did not include the idea of the male paying for the date so that they female owed him sexual favors. In some of the write ups, it was mentioned that the males did not understand the intent of the females struggles.

Proportionally, more females included these scripts in their protocols than did males. A word count showed that there were no differences in the number of words for females (x=237.4) in comparison to the number of words for males (x=233.8). Additional research is ongoing to ask subjects which of the five scenarios they feel would lead to the conversation between the two roommates to evaluate any possible sex differences.

Significantly more subjects agreed with the roommate that this activity was a rape. When agreeing with this statement both males and females were confident of their responses. Females who disagreed with the roommate, stating that this activity was not a rape, were not confident of their responses. The sample size is small and additional data needs to be collected but this finding agrees with another study from this lab that showed in an acquaintance rape females are not confident of their no responses. This finding differs for the males. Again, the sample size is small, but males who disagree with the roommate are fairly confident that this activity is not a rape. This effect was also found in the subjective definitions of rape study from this lab where males (n=8) who stated that physical coercion without a female struggle was not a rape were as confident of their no decision as those males (n=12) who stated that this activity was a rape. Additional research into

about scripts and subjective rape definitions should point out "grey" areas where individuals are not sure or unaware of what is considered a legal rape.

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